1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mirebalais

Dead: I have worked; I have planted this seed. Make it yield for me, that I may make offerings to the Mysteries, the Saints, the Twins, the Dead."

At the entrance to the field the cranium of a horse, a mule, or a burro may be erected on a pole as magic against evil, and a wooden cross to which limes are attached may also be raised to protect against any expression of envy that might place a spell upon the growing plants. Finally, if there is any reason to believe that evil magic may have been invoked against the owner, a *hungan*, or *vodun* priest is summoned to make a charm to ward it off, and, with a little ceremony, he inters this charm in the middle of the garden or at its entrance.

In addition to this, first fruits must be given as an offering to the supernatural forces whose goodwill has permitted a bountiful yield, particularly in the case of staple crops such as maize and rice. As the first heads of maize are brought in, they are roasted, and the kernels are cut from the cobs. The head of the household then throws them to the four cardinal points either in the garden or before his house, and as he does this, he pronounces an invocation such as the following:

" Jesu Christ, les Saints, les Marassa, les Morts: M' jet' maï' baï' ou, c'est pou' toujou' m' gagne baï' ou, et pou' m' gagne courai' pou' travai' a'c p'tit' moin, a'c femme moin, a'c parent' moin, a'c toute famille-a. Conserve m' pou' m' pas malade, pou' m' toujours join pou, m' baï' ou. — Jesus Christ, the Saints, the Twins, the Dead: I throw maize for you, that I may always have some to give, that I may gain courage [strength] to work, and also my children, my wife, my relations, and all my family. Care for me that I do not fall ill, so that I may always have [something] to give you."

After this ritual the new crop is available to its owner for whatever use he may care to make of it.

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mirebalais

combines an explanation having an element of correctness — "a charm against harm" — with entire misunderstanding when he speaks of the color as symbolizing a "declaration of a holy war against wrong and oppression." Some, but not all of the Ogun *loa* drink Haitian rum. Ogun himself is identified with St. James the Elder, and his sacred day is Wednesday. This *loa* is a *Nèg' défence* and protects his worshippers from bullets or wounds inflicted by weapons. Ogun Balandjo guards travelers, though he is not as strong as such others of the Ogun group as Ogun Badagri and Ogun Batala, with whom he shares the bamboo tree as a habitation. The former gives *connaissance* — knowledge — which permits those he possesses to prohesy; the latter endows with the ability to prepare healing baths. The Ogun *loa* Erzilie and Damballa are jealous gods. On the day sacred to each, a devotee puts fresh linen on his bed, places powder, soap, and a comb near by, and sleeps alone. If the devotee is a woman, her husband sleeps elsewhere; if a man, his wife must seek another place; otherwise the transgressor would die.

Agwe Woyo is god of the sea, but, as might be expected, neither he nor his son and daughter, Agweto and Agweta Woyo, figures as importantly in Mirebalais as in coastal areas. For the folk of Mirebalais the river-gods, particularly the spirit of the Artibonite River, are of much greater importance. This last-mentioned *loa*, named Clairmé, a Pétro deity like his wife and daughter, Mme. Clairmé and Clairmézine, lives in the deepest part of the stream with the other members of his "family." Similarly, the deepest parts, or *bassins*, of tributary streams hold the spirits of those waters. And since all these tributaries flow into the Artibonite, and the Artibonite empties into the ocean, it is said that when the river is in flood, Clairmé is engaged in inspecting his domain, being greeted by the spirits of all the smaller rivers as he passes their mouths. At this time the flow of the water in each tributary is arrested until he has gone by, when, in a great swirl,

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mirebalais

776
●823 it joins the flooded Artibonite as its master accompanies Clairmé on his way to consult with the great ruler of the sea, Agwe. Actually, at the height of the rainy season the force of the light colored muddy water of the major stream holds back the darker colored flow of its tributaries in a manner which accords with the legend, so that, observing the Tombe River at one such time, the Haitians who were present said: "The Tombe is waiting for its master to pass."

776
[784] Gede, a deity who figures in both the Rada and the Pétro
[794] groups as chief functionary under Baron Samedi, ruler of cemeteries, is tolerated rather than favored, though his rewards to his devotees include the refusal to dig a premature
[787] grave for them. When Gede possesses a devotee at a dance, Damballa, Ogun, and the other Rada gods "leave" at once, and those who are possessed by them come out of their possessions. For though Gede is no less a *loa* than other gods, "He is a *zombi* and is fed apart"; as the Haitians say: "The *loa*
[872] are like human beings. They will not mingle with the dead, and Gede is of the dead." His color is black, and Saturday
[782] is his sacred day. He "eats" salt herring, hot peppers, cassava, roasted corn, roasted bananas, and other roasted foods. He
[825] drinks *clairin* — much of it — and at great ceremonies a black goat and chickens are killed for him, as well as those chickens with ruffled feathers called *djakati*, which in all the New World, as in Africa, are believed to discover and dig up magic charms set against their owners. He lives in the cemetery, "behind the cross." There are a number of deities whose names are compounded with the name of Gede — Gedenibo, Gedeonsu, Gedehun — and hence the question whether or not this is a generic term or a specific designation is pertinent. There is no agreement on this point, and it could only be established that those *loa* who bear the same name, such as all Ogun or Bosu or Simbi deities, are brothers; but who the parents of these groups may have been is not known.

Associated with Simbi and Gede in the Pétro "squad" are

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

764 invoked the loa, the pallbearers brought the body forward as though to go straight ahead, but then they began to lurch and sway as though an invisible force were pushing them around. They veered as though to take the right turn, and again they lurched and staggered. At last they turned toward the left, and in this direction they found the road clear. The houngan thanked the Master of the Crossroads, the widow took her place at the head of the procession, and it proceeded on its way to the cemetery.

793 764 762 In the services for a dead houngan described by Simpson, the body is placed in a coffin, which is carried to all the places sacred to the loa of the hounfor before being taken to the cemetery. First it is taken to the sacred trees where the loa reside, then to the sacred spring "whose waters have cured many sicknesses which physicians had pronounced incurable . . . [823] The bearers of the coffin circle the spring several times. The coffin is swung [toward] each of the four cardinal points." Afterward the procession continues its way to the burial ground.[17]

766 174 761 But the treatment given to the dead may vary according to the manner in which they died. Leyburn notes, for example, that "a person struck by lightning . . . would have no ceremonies at all, for lightning is an act of God."[18] It may well be that the Haitian rationale for not holding ceremonies for an individual killed by lightning is that God has already held the final ceremony. But in the Haitian mind all deaths are, in the last analysis, acts of God, even though magic, poison, or accident may have played an immediate part. Why, then, should the corpse struck by lightning be treated so differently? The answer would appear to lie in a custom 171 766 761 of the Yoruba of dispensing with all burial rites for persons killed by lightning, such persons being considered enemies of the lightning deity [174] Chango. In Dahomey, Herskovits reports, the same attitude prevails in regard to persons killed by lightning:

> If a person is killed by lightning he . . . stands convicted by this fact of some grave crime which has incurred the displeasure of the god of the Thunder Pantheon (Xevioso). A person so killed is never buried by his family, but the body is turned over to the chief priest and cult-members of these deities. It is believed that a man killed in this fashion remains upright until the chief priest questions him and forces him to confess the crimes he had committed to be so punished. No one touches any [768] of the belongings of such a man, not even his money. The house in which he lived [784] is allowed to go to ruin, an *asan* of palm fronds being placed around it to guard [824] against anyone entering it. The moveable property of such a man, his clothes, his stools, and his dishes, are thrown away at the crossroads . . .[19]

766 The burial of a Haitian who dies of smallpox likewise differs from that of one who dies a "normal" death. The victim of smallpox is buried without a coffin in a segregated part of the cemetery. The reason for this lies

17 [Simpson, Op. Cit., P. 161. Cf. P. 350 Category 116. -- Analyst]
18 [Leyburn, The Haitian People, P. 156. Cf. P. 350, Category 116. -- Analyst]
19 [Herskovits, Dahomey, I, 398. Cf. P. 350, Category 116. -- Analyst]

R. Courlander 8-8 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

of Haiti. But the route to it is through water. When the Haitians say "under the water" they do not mean under the sea. The ocean is regarded as the special domain of Agwé, La Sirène, and a few related deities, but it has nothing to do with most loa. "Under the water" specifically means under the springs, the rivers, and the fresh-water lakes. Fresh water has the greatest of significance in relation to most of the Vodoun deities.

When a loa comes to visit his Haitian children he comes by way of the *chimin dleau* (the water road)—that is to say, by way of the river, the waterfall, or the spring. Because the spring is the primary source of fresh water, it is the most direct means of contact with the land of the loa. Tales are heard everywhere of persons who, drawing water from the spring at night, heard the voices of loa or the sound of singing and drumming coming up from somewhere below. And virtually all the tales about human beings who visited the land of the loa describe them as descending into a river or disappearing into a waterfall.

The loa are accustomed to traveling by the "water road." And in all aspects of the Vodoun service, this "water road" is refreshed and replenished. When the road is dry, contact with the loa is diminished. When it is moist, the loa travel easily.

Thus, the houngan constantly uses water to entice and invite the deities. He holds a glass or pitcher of water at the center pole of his peristyle. He extends it toward the four cardinal points. He spills water at the foot of the center pole. He spills water in the hounfor at the foot of the *pé*, or altar. He sets a pitcher of water at the gateway of his *habitation*. And often, during a service, he pours a pathway of water in the dust from his gateway into his peristyle. Within nearly every hounfor there is at least one *bassin*, or pool, dedicated to the loa who is the *maît' caille*, the master of the house. These pools are carefully filled with water drawn from the springs. They are places of rest and refreshment for the deities whose names or portraits are inscribed on the walls above.

Sometimes rites and services are held at the site of the spring, the houngan and his entourage marching down to it from the hounfor for the occasion. So, too, there are annual pilgrimages to waterfalls such as Saut d'Eau, where the loa mount their "horses" in profusion.

Within the hounfor, during a service, the cult priest and the servitors pour "libations" of water on the earth, so that the loa may be refreshed. And virtually without end, the hounfor is the scene of ritual ceremonies in which the loa is bathed and thus "renewed" in the heads of his servitors.[A]

[A] [For footnote, see category 116, P. 351.--Analyst]

2: Courlander B-S (1937-1953) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

The importance of water in Vodoun has a fundamentally West African character. Among the Yoruba and the Ashanti and in Dahomey, for example, water rites are a significant aspect of religious ritual. Herskovits notes the frequency of religious pilgrimages to streams in West Africa.

> In one instance, at Abeokuta, a bedecked procession of worshipers left a shrine atop a high hill, followed a long path to the riverside over two miles away, and returned before the ceremonies could be carried out at the shrine of the god. On one occasion, in Dahomey, the bed of the sacred stream ran dry was "filled" from nearby wells so that this water could be ritually redrawn for use in an especially important ceremony. Among the Ashanti, pilgrimages to Lake Bosumtwe and other sacred bodies of water regularly occur. And it is on such occasions that the spirit of the river or lake or sea manifests itself, by "entering the head" of the devotee and causing him to fling himself, possibly possessed, into the water.[8]

So it is also in Haiti, where possession at the river's edge may cause the devotee to leap into the river. At Saut d'Eau, possessed persons plunge into the waterfall without regard for their safety, being in the care of the loa who have mounted them.

Into this water complex the Christian rite of baptism has been easily absorbed, providing merely a new act of veneration for water and its properties. In the Haitian mind baptism is not far removed from the *lavé tête* ritual, the washing of the head, or the *rafraîchi tête*, the "refreshing" of the head, both of which are acts in propitiation of the loa.[9] So related is the baptismal concept in the Haitian mind, that the term "baptize" is used to describe the lavé tête; it is said that the loa is being "baptized." So also are drums "baptized," not to mention yams, and even the hounfor itself.

Marriage to a Loa

Although the term *hounsi* (spirit wife, or wife of the spirit) is applied to a large class of servitors of the Vodoun temple, only a small number of servitors ever pass through rites which give them a husband-wife or wife-husband relationship with a loa. Reasons for these mystic marriages vary, but usually the rituals take place upon the prescription of a cult priest who interprets the will of the deities concerned. Most of the mystic marriages of which I have heard have taken place in the general area of Port-au-Prince and the Cul-de-Sac Plain. In some other areas of Haiti it appears that no such rites have taken place locally within the memory of the elder inhabitants. One aged man living near Belladère declared: "It [marriage to a loa] is impossible. People serve loa, they do not marry them. A man does not marry his lwa. A loa

8 [Herskovits, The Myth of the Negro Past, p. 233. Cf p. 351, Category 116. -- Analyst]

9 [It is of interest to note the perseverance of traditional attitudes toward water rites in certain negro cults in the United States. River baptism often is attended by ecstatic seizures in familiar form. Cf p. 351, Category 116. -- Analyst]

Attibon Legba ouvri bayè pou' moin ago!
Ou wè Attibon Legba ouvri bayè pou' moin ouvri bayè!
M'apé rentré quand ma tourné,
Ma salut loa yo!

Attibon Legba, open the gate for me, *ago!*
You see, Attibon Legba, open the gate for me, open the gate!
I will enter when I return,
I salute the loa!

After this appeal, or sometimes while it is being sung, the houngan spills a little water on the earth at the base of the po'teau mitan. It is an inducement for the loa to "enter," for the loa reside "below the water" and their passage into the hounfor is made easier by water. The houngan may spill his water in a long path from the entrance of the peristyle to the po'teau mitan, or extend his pitcher invitingly to the four points of the compass. Then, perhaps, another song is sung to Legba:

Papa Legba nan hounfor moin!
Papa Legba nan hounfor moin!
Papa Legba nan hounfor moin!
Ou même qui porté drapeau,
C'est ou même ka paré soleil pou' loa yo!
Papa Legba, Papa Legba!

Papa Legba is in my hounfor!
Papa Legba is in my hounfor!
Papa Legba is in my hounfor!
You who carry the flag,
It is you who shade the loa from the sun!
Papa Legba, Papa Legba!

As the ritual gets under way, there may be a general song of welcome to all the loa of the cult, such as this one:

Bonjou' oh bonjou' bonjou' bonjou' bonjou'!
Bonjou' oh bonjou' bonjou' bonjou' bonjou'!
Oh bonjou' oh bonjou' loa moin! [Ex. 43]

Good day, oh, good day, good day, good day, good day!
Good day, oh, good day, good day, good day, good day!
Oh, good day, oh, good day my loa!

When the service is well in progress, the songs may describe the qualities of the deities—their character, behavior and needs. If it is Balindjo, for example, the song may advertise that persons with this loa in their heads are immune to poison:

Ogoun Balindjo,
Oh Ogoun oh!

Ogoun Balindjo,
Oh, Ogoun, oh!

Ogoun Balindjo,	Ogoun Balindjo,
Oh Ogoun oh!	Oh, Ogoun, oh!
C'est pas mangé rangé	There is no poisoned food
Pral tuyé chwal moin! [Ex. 44]	That will kill my horse!

Ogoun Fai, known also by the Christian name St. Jacques, is the deity of war, and this song describes his courage and valor:

St. Jacques Majeur a voyé dit'm ga'çon déjà!
St. Jacques oh voyé dit'm ga'çon déjà!
St. Jacques Majeur a voyé dit'm ga'çon la-guè!
St. Jacques oh voyé dit'm ga'çon la-guè! [Ex. 45]

Major St. Jacques sent to tell me he is already a man!
St. Jacques, oh, sent to tell me he is already a man!
Major St. Jacques sent to tell me he is a man of war!
St. Jacques, oh, sent to tell me he is a man of war!

Should the service be to the loa Damballa Wèdo, symbolized as a rainbow and a great serpent, this song might be sung, commenting that he cannot be drowned in the water:

Papa Damballa ou c'est coulèvе oh!
Pouq'ou pas néyé?
Pouq'ou pas néyé?
Damballa pouq'ou pas néyé nan dlèau? [Ex. 46]

Papa Damballa you are a snake, oh!
Why don't you drown?
Why don't you drown?
Damballa, why don't you drown in the water?

Damballa, the rainbow, is in fact the source of the water that bubbles from the earth in springs. He is a patron of the spring, and there he often lives in the form of a water snake. In many a hounfor where Damballa is specially revered there is a *bassin*, or pool, dedicated to him. On the wall behind the pool there is usually a painting of Damballa and Ayida, depicted as great serpents, sometimes with a feathered headdress. The pool is kept filled with fresh water from the spring, and here one or more small snakes—symbols of Damballa and Ayida—reside:

Ala loa marché nan dlèau
C'est Damballa!
Ala loa marché nan dlèau
C'est Damballa!
Papa Damballa c'est tête à dlèau!
Papa Damballa c'est tête à dlèau!

There is a loa who lives in the water,
It is Damballa!

Maît' Grand Chimin (Master of the Highway). Probably Legba. [176] [175]

Makanda. Believed to be the spirit of the famous houngán Makandal, who lived during the revolutionary period. He is symbolized as a snake which lives in the ground. Some informants think he is a Pétro rather than a Dahomé loa.

Mambo Çaça

Tijean Danton (Ancient Tijean)

Wittbah Walo. Whydah is the name of a seacoast town in Dahomey.

Zo. A fire deity of clear Dahomean origin.

Orichia

Oxaa, or Oxanos. Known also among the Lucumí cults of Cuba. May be any one of the Oxangos mentioned by Herskovits. [171]

Oxange Léléi

Ochojabè

Papa Dahomé

Pierre Basico. This loa is sometimes identified with St. Peter. [179]

Pierre Damballa, Dambarra, or Dambada. Sometimes identified with St. Peter.

Pierre Walo. Related to Whydah Walo.

Poula, or Foula. This name is probably a tribal designation.

Sabata. Described as a loa of ancient times. Sabata or Sagbata is the so-called smallpox group of deities of Dahomey.

Sâla. A female deity, thought by some to belong to the Rzilie Fréla family.

Silibo Gwèto. In Dahomey, according to Herskovits, Silibo is an ancient sib-founder. [171]

Silidja

Taureau

Ti Chak. This is a "false name"; this loa keeps his real name a secret.

THE AMBIVALENT SIMBI FAMILY

This group of loa in certain regions has attached itself to the Vodoun pantheon, elsewhere to the Congo-Guinée pantheon; but it has not maintained any kind of independent or semi-independent status. The deity Simbi and his family are of Congo origin. [171]

Sosoa. A male deity, patron of rain and drinking water. Said to be the father of the Simbis brothers.

Simbi Dlaau. The best known of the Simbi family. Like his father, he is the patron of fresh water, is associated with the spring, and usually is symbolized as a snake. The color sacred to him is white. Altars to Simbi Dlesu usually are found at the spring or the well. Sometimes ponds are constructed for him within the houmfor. [823] [822] [178]

Simbi Kitta

Simbi Yendéan, or Simbi Nan Dé Zeaux (Simbi in Two Waters). Symbolized as a water snake who lives in the "upper" waters and the "lower" waters.

Grand Sosoa. The parent of Simbo, and ancestor of the entire family of water loa.

Simbi Trois Zilé (Simbi of Three Islands)

Simbi Macaya

Simbi Grand Bois (Simbi of the Forest)

[EIDS, The Ewe-Speaking Peoples, pp. 91-94. Cf. P 354, Category 116.--Archivist]

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1958) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

Chapter 5: *Services for the Loa and the Family Ancestors* (*pp. 41–74*)

[1]Note that the houngan and the laplace are performing services normally performed by the *petit serviteur*.
[2]Herskovits, *Dahomey*, II, 165.
[3]Parsons, *Spirit Cult in Hayti*.
[4]Account given by Jean Ravel Pintro.
[5]Informant: Albert Kofi Prempeh, Ghana.
[6]Account given by Voluska Saintvil. A. W. Cardinall notes in his book *Tales Told in Togoland* (p. 69): "Trees are in most cases treated with respect. Before a man dare fell one *koo* a canoe he must and invariably does sacrifice to its spirit and apologizes for the harm he is about to do it."
[7]The rite of *rafraichi tête* is conducted periodically for a *maît' tête* after the original *lavé tête* ceremony. The purpose is to "refresh" the loa and make him content with his residence in the head of the devotee.
[8]Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past*, p. 213.
[9]It is of interest to note the perseverance of traditional attitudes toward water rites in certain Negro cults in the United States. River baptism often is attended by ecstatic seizures in familiar form.
[10]Odette Mennesson Rigaud, "Notes on Two Marriages with Voudoun Loa," in Appendix A of Deren, *Divine Horsemen*, p. 264.

Chapter 6: *Songs of the Peristyle* (*pp. 75–94*)

[1]This theme is further commented on in chap. 13. Compare with the following excerpt from a Surinam song reported by Herskovits in *Suriname Folk-Lore* (p. 689):

I have no mother there,
I have no father there,
I have no sister there,
I haven't got anybody there.

Chapter 7: *In the Mapou Tree: Magic, Demons, and Compacts* (*pp. 95–104*)

[1]Simpson, "Haitian Magic," *Social Forces*, October, 1940, p. 97.
[2]Note the coincidence of the term *gris-gris* or *grigri* as used in the United States, where it has the same meaning as *mojo*, or "voodoo" charm.
[3]Simpson, "Haitian Peasant Economy," *Journal of Negro History*, October, 1940, p. 393.
[4]Herskovits, *Dahomey*, II, p. 243.

Chapter 8: *Mardi Gras and Rara: Jugglers, Maypoles, and Kings* (*pp. 105–109*)

[1]Aubin, *En Haïti*, p. 42.
[2]Marionettes of this kind have been observed in both East and West Africa and are well known in the region of Senegal. I saw a phallic marionette, virtually identical with the Haitian version, in the neighborhood of Khartoum, Sudan.

Chapter 9: *Land and Work* (*pp. 110–121*)

[1]Franklin, *The Present State of Hayti*, p. 362.
[2]Herskovits, *Dahomey*, I, 300 ff., describes Dahomean polygamous marriage in its various forms. Although Dahomean plural marriage is complex in terms of gifts, obligations, and

3: Leyburn Z-4, 5 (no date) 1966
SV3 Haiti SV3

bean country, and perhaps fewer than in any country in Latin America. The agriculture itself, with the exceptions now of those very few large-scale plantations in sisal and sugarcane, is adapted to small plots and is worked with intensive labor and few tools on hilly land. Compared with agricultural production, especially of cash crops, in most mainland Latin American countries, productivity is low. The yeomanry is conservative in its agricultural practices, and not ready to change unless the changes entail minimal risk and the gains to be realized are clearly demonstrable (Erasmus, 1952:20–26). Yeomen cultivate with three goals in mind: cash income from world-market commodities (for instance, coffee, sisal, vetiver); cash income from items produced for local sale and consumption; and subsistence. While they are heavily involved in production for sale, their crop choices and land-use patterns rest fundamentally on a subsistence orientation. All grow a substantial part of their own food, especially sorghum, maize, sweet potatoes, taro, manioc, malanga (*Xanthosoma sagittifolium* Schott), plantains and bananas, fruits and vegetables, and rice where possible. The land is invested with considerable affect: gods live in it; it is the ultimate security against privation; family members are buried in it; food and wealth come from it; and it is good in itself, even if not cultivated. While such attitudes are common in yeoman societies, Haiti's history of slavery, and of access to land through revolution, has given a special symbolic significance to landowning. Land is valued above all else and is sometimes held "uneconomically"—that is, even when the capital and labor power to work it are lacking.

Leyburn describes better than any other writer the history of land acquisition by the yeoman after 1804. The French plantations lay in ruins, never to recover, while early authoritarian attempts to restore the prerevolutionary economy under native Haitian leadership soon failed. In the course of a century, the Haitian people laid claim to their own soil, while population growth and the adoption of the French tradition of equal inheritance progressively reduced the average size of holdings. In spite of some plantation development after the United States occupation, most agricultural land in Haiti is still employed in small holdings, and "land reform" in the conventional sense—the breaking-up of large estates and the creation of a class of small landholders—is nearly irrelevant to Haiti's needs.

As today's yeomanry cultivates, so its womenfolk market. Nearly